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AUTHOR Lewis, Peter M.
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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to determine to what extent local communities control the local radio which serves them, by what formal mechanisms their control is secured, and the underlying assumptions and goals which govern the practice of the professionals who have charge of the facilities. Two British radio stations, BBC Radio Bristol and the Independent Local Radio (ILR) station--Thames Valley Broadcasting in Reading, are reviewed, as is STAD Radio Amsterdam. Contexts in which each of the stations operate are provided, giving background information on their creation and leading into separate discussions of each station's profile, including start date, studio address, area served, frequency, staff, finances, hours of operation, programming and operations control. In each case the means and forms of local input are examined. An appendix gives a brief description of two Canadian radio stations, Radio Cinq, Montreal, and Vancouver Co-op Radio. (RAO)

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COMMITTEE FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION
AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY CONTROL OF LOCAL RADIO

by Peter M LEWIS

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FOREWORD

This study is one of a series dealing with different experiences of new techniques being used in European audiovision, and also on the audio-visual situation in general in some member states. It is part of the preparatory documentation for a colloquy on videography, radio and cable television scheduled in principle for May 1977. The following research, available during the first three months of 1977, deals specifically with the situation in Austria and Italy.

November 1976

The present study is commissioned by the Council of Europe in the framework of the Cultural Programme established by the Council for Cultural Co-operation. The statements made in this study are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Council of Europe or of its member governments.

COMMUNITY CONTROL OF LOCAL RADIO (1)

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(1) This study would have been impossible without the co-operation of many busy people working in broadcasting as staff, part-timers and advisers, especially David Waine, Neil French-Blake, Armand Sliepen, Leo Jacobs and their staffs in Bristol, Reading and Amsterdam: to all of them many thanks for their time, patience and hospitality. In Canada, I am grateful for their help to the CRTC, Mark Zannis and Jim Harper, and to Justine Dancy and Liora Salter for their example.

PML. Bristol 1976

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the study

The aim of this study was to examine to what extent in three local radio stations - BBC Radio Bristol, the ILR (+) station Thames Valley Broadcasting in Reading, and STAD Radio Amsterdam - local communities control the local medium which serves them, by what formal mechanisms their control (or participation) is secured, and what are the underlying assumptions and goals which govern the practice of the professionals who have charge of the facilities.

The general context is what might be called 'social consumerism', a phrase which embraces a widespread and, in recent years, a growing concern among the users of public services, such as for example, health, transport, housing and education, to influence the local control of resources within nationally determined policies. Broadcasting has not been exempt from this concern in a number of Western European countries and the Netherlands, although exploring local broadcasting only recently, have in their national system taken community control and accountability further than any other country.

In a Council of Europe study of 1973, Brian Groombridge, considering the future of broadcast access, remarked that "the aim is not to achieve democratic interruptions in the schedules otherwise consisting of manipulative programmes. The democratic ethos needs to permeate the entire output."

Hopkins, Gunn and Martin in a later Council of Europe study (2) argue that such a process "can only be put into practice if an authority is prepared to consider structural change of an order of magnitude which will enable the processing of more grassroots information with the active assistance of members of the public." More recently, in the light of the experience of the British cable TV experiments and of certain Canadian examples of community-controlled radio and television, the present writer has argued that there is a risk of access programming diverting attention from the issues of the accountability of regional and local stations for their whole operation to the publics they serve. (3)

The relevance of these considerations is, in Britain, underlined by the imminent publication of a report by the Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting, and in the Netherlands by the debate on the future funding of the current local cable TV and radio stations after the initial experimental period.

The present study connects also with the preoccupations of the Council of Europe in the field of videography. At a recent colloquy in which the management of audio-visual resource centres was discussed, the participants recommended that centres "should operate on a pluralistic principle of participative management and guarantee equal freedom of access to all users." (4) It is a natural development to consider the extent to which these principles are already being applied at local level in an established medium like radio.

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(+) ILP = Independent Local Radio, see 2 (B).

1.2 Argument

While it must be admitted that underlying the title is a belief that the logical conclusion of the line of thinking demonstrated in the previous section is local ownership and control of some at least nationally allocated resources (ie frequencies), it must also be said that formal democratic control does not necessarily ensure the 'democratic ethos' to which Groombridge refers. Nor is accountability necessarily associated with audience satisfaction. There are undoubtedly many communities which feel themselves well-served by a local station which is firmly controlled by professionals. And a sensitivity to needs and wishes may be evinced as well by a commercial enterprise as by a non-profit community-controlled station.

A wider and more detailed study would have been necessary to establish to what extent general correlations can be shown to exist. The localness of local stations and the communities to which they transmit in any case makes generalisation difficult. What is attempted here is a description of what actually happens in three stations in relation to the formal instruments of community participation or control. The responsiveness of a station informally through programming and relationships with the community is of equal importance but again not one that can be as easily assessed in a short study. Acquaintance with programming over a considerable period of time is necessary before passing judgement on this aspect of a station's performance, and this possibility was only approached (though not satisfied) in the case of the station serving the writer's home town, Bristol.

A concentration on formal mechanisms need not, however, be solely a theoretical exercise. For example, the attempts to reanimate the governing bodies of English schools - bodies which till recently were powerless appendages of the system - is a very practical part of the current debate about the school curriculum.

1.3 'Community'

Finally, by way of introduction it is necessary to define what in this study is meant by the word 'community'. Although sociologists have pointed out the difficulties of assuming an equation between community and geographical locality (5), broadcasters continue to talk as if at least a transmission area is, if not one community at least the sum of a number of communities. The manager of BBC Radio Bristol spoke of some 20 communities within his transmission area, and the 28 different district communities of Amsterdam nominate a representative on STAD Radio Amsterdam's Foundation Board. In a sense, a radio station creates a community of listeners and both BBC and ILR make the claim of certain stations that they are a unifying force in an area in which hitherto disparate population has been brought under one new local administration. (6)

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At the same time there are obvious 'communities of interest' within any geographical area with each of which a local station can form a relationship more effectively than can a national network. Burns (7) cites a view of community which suggests that the more specialist programming aimed at these interest groups has a value transcending the obvious appeal to the target audience. On this view, community activities are a set of related games - "the banking game, the newspaper game, the manufacturing game, the ecclesiastical game" - each played by specialists, but each having relevance for the other games and for the community as a whole.

To summarise, community is used in this study to stand for the sum of communities, whether geographical or 'communities of interest', reached by a station's editorial coverage area. This last phrase distinguishes the area deliberately served from the larger area into which transmissions overspill.

1.4 Method of study

Local stations, even in one system, are by their nature very different from each other, and there seemed no one standard template into which the three chosen for this study could fit uniformly. The national, and system contexts - all different - are also important for an understanding of the local contribution and separate sections are accordingly devoted to each of these.

Where the individual stations were concerned, the method used, apart from the study of documents, was to talk to the station manager and to the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee or controlling board. Shorter conversations were held with other staff, advisers and helpers: it is obvious that in a healthy station reflecting many aspects of local life, different perceptions of a station's role and its success will be found among those who work there. But in the end, where the staff are concerned, it is the manager's view which is most influential in policy and to which therefore most weight is attached here.

On the other hand, since time and ignorance of the Dutch language placed limitations on the Amsterdam study, more of the effort in STAD was directed to talking to the staff and watching the station in operation. In Bristol, listening to the station over a period of time formed an important part of the evidence, whereas with Thames Valley in Reading, listened to quite frequently for short periods and visited several times, the policy of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and its procedures occupies important space, as one might expect in a two-tier structure. The BBC's central view of local radio was sought in discussions with the General Manager and Deputy General Manager (Local Radio), as well as from documents, and in the Netherlands, the Head of the Directorate of Radio, Television and the Press in the Ministry of Cultural and Social Affairs supplied the national perspective. The bibliography lists details of the documents studied.

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2. CONTEXTS (A) The BBC

The Council of Europe published in 1973 a study of British Local Radio written by a former BBC Controller of Educational Broadcasting, Richmond Postgate. (8) The study was written two years after the last of the present 20 BBC Local Radio stations came on air, but before the opening of the first ILR stations.

It is not proposed here to do more than summarise developments since then.

The return of a Labour Government in 1974 had an important effect on broadcasting. Ministerial responsibility was transferred to the Broadcasting Department of the Home Office. The new administration cut short the IBA's development of commercial local radio and recreated a Committee on the Future of Broadcasting under the chairmanship of Lord Annan to recommend what should be the pattern of broadcasting after the expiry of the BBC's Charter and the Broadcasting Act governing ITV and ILR which were now both prolonged to 1979. During its work, the committee's interest in regional and local broadcasting was remarked on by observers. Its report is expected to be published in the first half of 1977.

The economic situation led to some reduction of BBC's nationally networked provision - Radios 1 and 2 shared programming at certain hours, as did Radios 3 and 4 - and there were slight reductions in the centrally allocated budgets for local radio. But the BBC made very clear the importance it attached to local radio. A government committee reporting in 1973 on the technical provision of telecommunications services had suggested that in radio the BBC should be allowed to set up a dozen small stations in rural areas. In its evidence to the Annan Committee (9) the BBC stated its belief that "local community radio will be the main growth area in radio during the last quarter of the century", and asked to be allowed to proceed with the development of plans halted by the Conservative Government in 1970. Experiments in very small local stations, manned with reduced staffs, were carried out in 1975 and 1976 in the north of England, and a local radio station manager was seconded to prepare a report identifying communities in England (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland having their own separate plans for community radio) which represent the 30% of the population still without local radio. The "Ennals report" has not yet been made public, but on the basis of it the BBC recently put its case for a further 45 stations to complete its English network. (10)

The terms of reference for BBC local radio were set out in a White Paper of 1966 which stated that local radio should "by giving a new means of expression to its (the local community) particular interest and aspirations serve to reinforce its distinctive character and sense of identity." (11) The White Paper envisaged local sources of finance assisting the BBC's effort, and this included not only local authorities but "the local university (where

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one exists), the Open University, Chambers of Trade and Commerce, local Councils of Churches, arts associations and other representative bodies active in the social and cultural life of the community". (12) In the initial two-year period, when the first eight stations started up, the BBC found it difficult to persuade all local authorities to assist financially, and this support soon dropped off. Cash contributions from other sources have been the exception, but it is normal practice for a wide range of local institutions to assist in kind, for example by encouraging staff in the course of their work to produce or take part in programmes; and secondments of teachers to work on education programmes are also common.

The BBC emphasises very strongly the freedom allowed to their local managers. Central services of engineering, personnel and accounting support the stations and, in programming, national networks complement the service, particularly with news bulletins during the day and light or pop music at night. But local programming and policy is entirely a matter for the station. Reliance on national networks has meant that the 'needle-time' allocation of recorded music, agreed with the performers' unions, works to the disadvantage of the local station, as local managers claim. The news operations of local stations also form an important network of local agencies supplying the national newsrooms.

The 1966 White Paper required the BBC to set up "local broadcasting councils .... widely representative of the community - including youth - (which would) play a fully formative part in the development of the station both as regards programme policy and content and as regards finance." (13) The BBC chose to make an Education Advisory Council (with delegated powers from the BBC's School Broadcasting Council) mandatory for all stations, and each station has an education producer.

CONTEXTS: (B) Independent Local Radio (ILR)

ILR, like ITV (Independent Television), is part of a two-tier system, with the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), a statutory body whose operations are defined by an Act of Parliament, having a four-fold relationship to the programming. The IBA (1) owns and operates the transmitters, (2) specifies the franchise and for each area selects a company to hold it, (3) controls the companies' performance in accordance with the Broadcasting Act, its own regulations and the promises of the successful franchise applicant (4) controls the amount and distribution of advertisements and secures the compliance of advertisers with a code of advertising standards.

The first two ILR stations started in London in October 1973 and within six months, Independent Radio News (IRN) was organised to supply national and international news to ILR companies who required the service. IRN's bulletins are in fact taken by Thames

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Valley Broadcasting, the station which is the object of the present study. Apart from IRN's service, the 19 ILR stations share almost no material and do not form a network. Their locations were chosen by the government on the basis of proposals put to them by the IBA. The Conservative Government which introduced commercial radio originally proposed 25 sites for stations, but when Labour returned to power in 1974, with the consequences for broadcasting described in the previous section, the number was frozen at 19. The criteria for selecting locations was to cover the major areas of population, to include some quite small areas, and to bring local radio to certain important areas such as Glasgow, South Wales and Belfast which were not served by any local radio.

In contrast to BBC local radio, a great deal of information is contained about ILR in the Broadcasting Act and the IBA's published guidelines. "Notes on ILR" (14) described for all intending applicants for radio franchises the technical arrangements and standards, the limitations on the composition of companies (the IBA must encourage a diversity and localness of ownership, and is required to allow local newspapers the opportunity to participate in, but not to control, a local station), the rental arrangements by which the IBA covers the cost of administering and transmitting ILR, and the control of advertising ('spot' advertising only is allowed and advertisements "must be clearly distinguishable as such and recognisably separate from the rest of the programme"; (15) not more than 9 minutes advertisements are permitted in any hour.)

Before advertising the franchise in an area, the IBA, working usually through one of its regional offices, writes to all the prominent organisations in the area inviting comments. The franchise is then advertised and local organisations and the consortia applying are invited to a public meeting in their area at which IBA staff and a sub-committee of the authority itself (whose 12 members, serving for three years, are appointed by the Minister) listen to views and answer questions. First-round interviews with applicants are held the next day, and a short list go forward to a final interview in London before the full authority a month later. The successful consortium is awarded a licence for three years in the first instance and its franchise application is published on the first day of transmission. The IBA also published the details of the shareholding in the company and identifies the members of the Board of Directors.

Local Advisory Committees (LACs)

By this time, the IBA will have selected a Local Advisory Committee under the conditions laid down in the Act. The purpose of the LAC is to "reflect, so far as is reasonably practical, the range of tastes and interests of persons residing in the area for which the committee is appointed." (16) At least a third of the LAC must be nominated by the appropriate local authorities, but they

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and all the rest of the membership are appointed as individuals and not as representatives. The IBA states that it attempts to select "men and women who would become willing and useful committee members, drawn from a spread of locations within the transmission areas served and coming from different age groups and occupations, with a variety of tastes, interests and social backgrounds." (17) The LAC will meet for the first time about the time of the station's first transmission and thereafter four times a year. It should be noted that in contrast to the BBC system, the LAC's role is to advise the IBA, not the programme company.

Chairpersons of the LACs meet together twice a year, and from time to time meetings have been arranged between groups of LACs from particular areas.

Their advice is, the IBA says, channelled through the IBA and if necessary can be acted on by staff who are in constant contact with the companies, or else raised at the regular meetings of all managing directors of ILR companies and the IBA. The LAC's judgement of a company's performance forms part of the evidence when the decision is made annually by the IBA whether or not to 'roll' the company's three-year contract forward for a further year. At the time of writing, the IBA has refused to 'roll' the contracts of two ILR stations (Thames Valley is not one of them) pending response to its suggestions for improvement.

CONTEXTS: (C) <u>The Netherlands</u>

Dutch broadcasting is a unique example of a national system which caters for 'communities of interest'. Preceding any arrangements for local broadcasting, the 'vertical' division of broadcast time and channels among seven associations representing different politico-religious affiliations theoretically accords more 'community control' (using the word in a non-geographical sense) than any other national system. With formal relationships between the broadcasters and their subscribers, and with twenty-seven other political, religious or social minority interests guaranteed occasional programming, access to decision-making as well as to air-time is a built-in part of the structure. Two regional stations of NOS exist in the north-east and south of the country, but although there are locally based advisory councils for each, control is from Hilversum.

The initial 'pirate' venture into cable television was legalised by a decree of 1971, and six cable TV licences were eventually granted by the Ministry of Cultural and Social Affairs to locally formed non-profit foundations which were deemed 'culturally representative'. Each foundation was free to interpret the requirement to be culturally representative in its own way, subject to the fact that the local council advised the Minister as to the representativeness of the group applying for a licence. The structures of control are very similar in all six cable TV stations. A council is composed of members nominated by the cultural, social, educational and leisure groups they represent. These latter have to

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be organisations properly recognised in law. Alongside nominated members of the council are a certain number elected from the foundation or television association. Conspicuous by their absence are any political representatives. The council decides the bread framework of policy. Either the council or the whole membership of the association appoint an executive board responsible for day to day policy, and for finance and administration. (18)

Finance

The two broadcast radio licences for STAD in Amsterdam and for SROB in Brabond, near Eindhoven, are similar to the cable licences, and since the subsequent financing of local radio and television (after the initial experimental period) is the crucial issue, it will be convenient to discuss it here in relation to all eight experiments before looking at STAD Radio Amsterdam in particular.

The funding from the Ministry of Cultural and Social Affairs is an allocation from the central licence fee for an initial two-year period. The present situation is, therefore, fixed and to some extent as artificial as the funding by commercial companies (forbidden to earn revenue) in the first phase of the British cable TV experiments. The key point is what will be allowed in the future. The ministry's position is quite simple: after the two-year period it is prepared to allow the stations to continue broadcasting but no further central funding will be allowed: finance will have to be found locally. Advertising now and in the future is ruled out.

In an attempt to gauge what sort of revenue-earning would be acceptable to the ministry, the present writer put a number of questions to the ministry's senior official responsible for broadcasting, Dr. W F Wilbers, based on recent developments in the British cable TV station, Swindon Viewpoint.

Dr. Wilbers was making an informal response, but with regard to listener subscription he felt that only a large city like Amsterdam could support a broadcast station by this means. Would the ministry allow it? "Yes, of course. I think that STAD has to try during the experiment in these two years to get an idea if the citizens think it is worth paying." There might, he thought, be possibilities for limited funding from central government sources interested in, for example, explaining entitlement to social benefits, or in the field of adult education. Or such socially acceptable 'sponsoring' might derive from non-governmental organisations such as these, for example, concerned with cancer relief. 'Sponsorship' of the station by local cultural groups "might be possible in the future". "What is not possible is advertising ... because we are too afraid that the commercials will have an influence on the programmes".

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To anticipate a little the discussion of STAD Radio Amsterdam, the Chairman of STAD's Council said that there had (September 1976) been some discussion in the Amsterdam Council about funding the station, but that since the city was being pressed by central government to reduce its deficit, an extra burden on local administration would not be viewed with sympathy by central government. Other possible sources of finance for STAD are the province, and the municipalities near Amsterdam within the coverage area. But "we are not very keen on local finance ... we don't need that pressure to say the least ... We must create a sort of independence from the source of the money. And so far there is no structure which could guarantee such independence."

3. THE STATIONS (A) BBC Radio Bristol

3.1 Station profile

Start date: 4 September 1970

Studios: 4, Tyndalls Park Road, Clifton, Bristol

Area: Primarily the County of Avon; news and current affairs coverage extends to Somerset, West Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire.

Frequencies: 194 Medium Wave; 95.5 VHF

Staff: 31 full-time staff

Finance: Entirely from central allocation out of licence fee. Running costs: £250,000.

Hours of programming: 0600-2400 hours, seven days a week. An average of 12 hours a day is locally originated, the remainder coming from BBC Radios 1, 2 and 4.

Formal advice/control structure: Local Radio Advisory Council (LRAC), statutory, 14 members, meeting every six weeks. Education Advisory Council, 20 members, meeting every 3 months. In addition there is a Religious Advisory Council.

3.2 The area

Bristol is about 200 km west of London. It is well connected to the capital, Wales and the Midlands by rail and motorways and as a formerly prosperous trading port (main modern employers are offices, and the aircraft and tobacco industries) it is known as the 'gateway to the West'. It shares something of the West Country's conservatism which is strengthened by the influence of the surrounding rural communities.

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BBC Radio Bristol's editorial coverage area extends in a radius of 50-60 km into the countryside.

There are no other BBC local radio stations in the West of England, the nearest stations being Oxford and Southampton. The BBC Local Radio Councils' evidence to Annan quotes the Bristol LRAC as urging support for the BBC's proposals for local radio stations at Exeter, Plymouth and Truro. "Of second priority would be stations at Swindon, Gloucester and Taunton" (19) - the last a tacit admission of the overlarge Radio Bristol area.

3.3 Consultation with community

It was originally intended that Bristol should be the site of one of the first eight BBC local stations, but it was not selected owing to Bristol City Council's unwillingness to make a financial contribution. However Bristol was a priority for the next wave (when solely BBC financing was planned) because by 1970 the West was to lose its regional radio, based in Bristol, as part of the BBC's plans for reorganisation.

The Station Manager, appointed from a post in BBC Radio Brighton, had five months to form a staff, engage the community in consultation, and prepare programme schedules. At that time, the selection of LRACs was in the hands of the ministry which, with 12 such councils to appoint, was not able to form a Bristol council in time to influence this pre-opening stage. However, the manager and his deputy immediately started a tour of the main areas of population and, in the manager's words, "met scores and scores of representatives of practically every type of mainstream organisation - religion, local councils, police, sporting bodies, arts organisations, universities and so on ... We held these meetings one at a time and found out what they thought the needs of their communities were, and the sort of station they wanted - the sort of sound they wanted as far as laymen can talk in these terms. As a follow up to that we held a series of public meetings with local people. We advertised these locally in the press and on regional radio as it was then, and we wrote to literally hundreds of local organisations inviting them to take part in public meetings in Bristol, Weston, Bath, Trowbridge and Taunton. We outlined to those meetings what it was we could provide, and then asked them what they wanted. And a number of suggestions that came up there we had not thought of and were embodied in our programme schedules."

3.4 Present programming

The present programming of Radio Bristol exhibits a considerable degree of community involvement, ranging from record requests and telephone calls, many of which are broadcast on air as part of the regular morning phone-ins to programmes produced and presented by non-staff producers. Examples of these are the sports programmes,

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farming, religion, folk music, programmes for schools and a recently introduced programme for the Bristol Asian community.

The usual arrangement is for a staff producer to have general responsibility for an area of programming (eg sport or education) and to supervise the work of free-lancers, seconded personnel or volunteers who interview, produce, research or present the programmes. Some of the programmes just mentioned - the Asian programme, the folk programme and a new 2½ hour youth programme on Sunday afternoons providing information on jobs and leisure activities for young people in a setting of rock music - have appeared in the schedules at the specific request of groups in the community. Others, like sport, would be there anyway but rely on a group of freelancers who organise the network of information from club secretaries.

Other programmes, again, like religion, farming and education, are organised more or less formally by community representatives. Education, as previously mentioned, is represented in the station by an education producer (who at Radio Bristol is also responsible for children's programmes) and seconded teachers, and programme plans are overseen by the station's Education Advisory Council. A Religious Advisory Council is made up of mainstream denominations with powers to co-opt minority denominations as required. Currently a Church of England minister is on secondment as the religious producer. The farming programme has very close ties with the National Farmers' Union who contribute to the programme, determine its timing in the schedules and to some extent the type of content. The NFU's network of local branches in contact with individual farmers gives it a strong claim to speak representatively.

As with all BBC local stations, news is a strong element with a professional staff of journalists as well as freelancers collecting items for several news bulletins daily. Some local government proceedings are transmitted live and recorded from two key councils (Bristol and Taunton Dean) and permission to broadcast Avon County Council has recently been given.

Lines also exist to the regional office of the national motoring organisation (the AA), to the Bristol Arts Centre and to a small studio to be opened shortly in Bath. This raises the important question of the physical presence of the station in the community. The studios are located in the BBC complex of buildings in an area of Bristol near the university. The reception area is small, busy and business-like but informal, approached across a forecourt from the street. Being however about two kilometres from the city centre in a largely middle-class residential and student area, the station is not easy to reach for the vast majority of the population. Frequent invitations on air to write or phone in to some extent make up for this disadvantage. The station's radio car is often seen about for news stories, weekend sports reports, church services and live musical events.

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3.5 The Local Radio Advisory Council

Members are nominated locally by the station manager acting with the Chairman, and formally appointed by the BBC's Board of Governors, this arrangement superseding the earlier system of appointment by the Minister.

Radio Bristol has used different methods for filling positions vacated after the three-year term or for other reasons - accepting suggestions from the council itself, writing to local organisations, and appealing on air for volunteers. On the two occasions the last method was used 60 and 40 people responded and though only one was chosen, the Chairman was pleased to have been brought into contact with a number of interested listeners.

Selection is described by the manager as "making the best selection one can, bearing in mind the needs that there are and the balance sociologically of the council." The present Chairman, a solicitor practising in Bristol, while agreeing that a balance was necessary, spoke of the difficulties: "Are they articulate, are they going to be out of their abilities altogether? So eventually you find someone who is articulate ... we've got lots of people in and we've probably chosen a chap who's interested in the station, has another dimension to him in terms of discussion .."

The BBC's evidence to the Annan Committee (20) says that the councils' "primary purpose is to provide the station manager and his staff with a feedback of information and comment about programmes and to make suggestions for covering subjects or areas hitherto neglected" - considerably less strong a brief than that given in the White Paper quoted in page 5 above.

Chairpersons of LRACs meet at the BBC in London quarterly for discussions with headquarters staff, and at any time have the right to take up points through them with the Director-General and Governors of the BBC and beyond them with the Minister. The previous chairman of the Radio Bristol LRAC did exercise this right in order to represent the value of BBC local radio to a Conservative Minister of Posts who was planning to restrict its further development.

A number of questions in the course of this study were directed towards ascertaining how public Radio Bristol and its LRAC were prepared to be about the advice given by the one to the other. The station manager suggested to the council some four years ago that it should consider broadcasting at least part of its meetings, but "the council was not prepared to do it. They felt it would inhibit discussion and make a boring radio programme." The present chairman has encouraged openness and recently local organisations have been invited to take part in the council's discussions.

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A recent innovation was a public meeting held on a weekday evening in a public hall in Bath, where the Chairman and some members of the LRAC (followed by their equivalents on the BBC's West Region Advisory Council) answered questions from the floor. Although the BBC had circularised some 200 organisations, only about 50 people were present. On a wet October night, they were likely to be the committed and the mood was, on the whole, uncritically complimentary towards the BBC. The exception was the feeling, founded in long rivalry between the two cities, that the station paid too much attention to Bristol at the expense of Bath.

It was an unsatisfactory meeting, whether one was looking for feedback or a testing of accountability. Subsequently, the station manager told the present writer how he tried to reach the less committed majority. His priority was that the station should be known about by the entire population, and listened to by a majority. If that was achieved, then the aim was to make sure that listeners knew that they could take part in decision-making by becoming involved in programme strands and by volunteering to serve on advisory councils. From then on, the impetus, he felt, should come from the listeners to the station.

It must be recorded that in over a year's regular listening the present writer has not heard any such specific invitations, as opposed to the frequent more general invitations to phone and write in with views or requests.

3.6 Training

For the active circle of people who want to help the station, occasional training courses are run for freelancers, and producers are encouraged to train their own teams, and do so. The Saturday morning children's programme gives particular encouragement to young people, and in recent summer holidays co-operated with Bristol Museum in arranging special sessions.

3.7 Audience

The people being reached as listeners by BBC Radio Bristol are a third of the population of greater Bristol daily, more men than women, more than 50% of the audience is working class, and almost all above the age of 25 (21). The manager pronounces himself satisfied with this result, and when pressed on the lack of young listeners he pointed out that teenagers have no reason to be concerned with community affairs, not yet having roots in the community through buying houses, paying rates or sending children to school.

3.8 Comment

Is the community satisfied with Radio Bristol? The LRAC would like to be more actively consulted and to participate. "There's not much you can do in terms of any consistent participation if you meet every six weeks."

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But outside the LRAC, which is very much the BBC's creation, there is no public, formal, local arena in which this question can be publicly raised. The BBC gives the service, and the BBC could take it away at any time. Although in Bristol's case it seems unthinkable that it would (and any such decision would be met with a "hue and cry" from the LRAC) Radio Durham was closed down after four years, because the subsequent establishment of radio stations to the north and south of Durham "made us feel that this was really rather an absurd use of scarce frequencies and resources ... It was closed down after a great deal of consultation with local authorities, against their wishes and with assurances that the two stations on either side ... would continue to pay attention to Durham." (22) Radio Bristol does not publish programme plans or policy statements and so its achievements cannot be publicly measured except in terms of the generalised goals stated in the 1966 White Paper or in the less strong version found in the BBC's Annan evidence. These achievements are considerable - a great deal of involvement of the community in Radio Bristol can be observed - but the judge of whether the job is being done properly is - the BBC itself.

STATIONS: (B) Thames Valley Broadcasting

3.9 Station profile

Start date: 8 March 1976

Studios: The Filberts, Bath Road, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire

Area: The Thames valley, including parts of Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Predicted VHF service area is 6-16 kilometres in radius.

Frequencies: 210 Medium Wave; 97.0 VHF

Staff: 33

Finance: from advertising revenue. No published figure as yet.

Hours of programming: 0600-2400 hours, seven days a week. Programming almost entirely locally originated, with IRN news bulletins.

Formal advice/control structure: Company appointed and controlled by Independent Broadcasting Authority, which receives advice from its Local Advisory Committee.

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3.10 The area

Reading is some 60 km west of London. The approximate population coverage of the station is 270,000. In the words of Thames Valley's programme plans, (25) the area contains "as broad a spectrum of people as can be found anywhere in Britain ... the commuting stockbrokers to the east and the immigrant population of the town centre; the workers at the biscuit factories and the farmers on the Berkshire Downs." Some of the area can receive the programming of the three London local radio stations (two ILR and one BBC), and some that of BBC Radio Oxford. The area is on the western fringe of the London ITV companies, Thames TV and London Weekend TV, and this last fact illustrates a dilemma about local life in Reading: the entertainment of London is easily accessible and support for cultural activities is hard to generate.

3.11 IBA control

Because of its closeness to London, the station is not overseen by an IBA regional officer like all the other out of London ILR stations, but by headquarters staff of the IBA - as are the two London ILR stations.

3.12 The company

Thames Valley is unusual among ILR stations in having so small a proportion of local ownership. In most other stations the local stake averages 75%, and in some cases local issues of shares to the public have been oversubscribed. 45% of Thames Valley is owned by News International Ltd, Rupert Murdoch's company which controls the London newspapers The Sun and The News of the World as well as large Australian interests. Thames Television with nearly 20% and EMI with nearly 10% are the largest other shareholders.

This situation was tolerated by the IBA when the company which was awarded the franchise was unable to raise the required capital in the spring of 1975 and attempts to encourage local investment were as ineffective as were the earlier ones of the unsuccessful franchise applicants. The economic situation had deteriorated that year making city loans difficult to obtain, and the whole initial phase of negotiations had been made under pressure of the government's requirement that the last ILR stations should be on air by the end of 1975. Following a practice that was not unusual in ILR, the IBA requested that the company take on to the board three members from the board of one of its rivals, a locally based group and subsequently allowed the changes which resulted in the present structure. The present board is 17 in number, and apart from the three just mentioned, contains five members who are not local, mostly representing the outside interests; the programme controller, the sales director and the former chief engineer are all members of the board. The local newspapers did not take up their option and thus have no interest. An executive committee of five oversees the running of the station and the programme controller and the sales director, both members of the committee, report to it.

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3.13 The programme plans

This part of the franchise application was published by the IBA in March 1976, and is quoted in full in the IBA's Annual Report for 1975/76. The plans were written for what was effectively a different company, but were accepted in toto by the present ownership and are being, in the opinion of the programme controller who wrote them as part of the original franchise bid, closely followed. The text runs to 1750 words and can only be briefly summarised here.

Under General Policy, the station states that it aims at professionalism, with the staple elements of programming being music and information - "we will present our audience with the companionship they demand from radio, combined with a constant challenge to their awareness ... Our programming will be fun. We will enjoy doing it, and so our audience will enjoy listening to it." The Music Policy is described as 'middle-of-the-road' during the day with more specialist music during the evenings. Under the heading Social Conscience, the station promises to deal with listeners' telephone calls effectively. On the other hand, "since phone-in programmes quickly gather a hard-core who are always ready to expound half-baked views on any subject" the station wishes "to avoid this pitfall". The station states its wish to experiment with access programming, not just using a discussion format but employing music, drama and poetry as people wish. Under the heading of the Arts, the station promises to review events in films, music and the theatre locally. The heading The Future is qualified by "if all goes well", and in that event experiments in recording live music and "in the education field" are intended.

News is defined as "any piece of information that may be of use to our listeners" and on the speed and accuracy with which this is provided, the station's success will, it believes, depend. Traffic, weather, crime and national news (to be supplied by IRN) are discussed, and under Local Politics the station hopes to bridge the communications gap between the local council and the people it serves. "We hope to maintain good relations with our local politicians, but they will be aware that we shall be constantly examining their actions, and that any unpopularity caused by their decisions is likely to be reflected through us by our listeners." "We shall keep a constant watch for potentially damaging effects of council decisions on the environment and amenities of our area."

Under the curious heading Men Women and Children the station states its awareness "that the great majority of our daytime audience will be those who are housebound and that they will be largely female." Regularly segmented Religious broadcasts will be avoided, and the immigrant population will not be treated separately, though "we will take account of their musical tastes in our music format." On Sport the station is not enthusiastic,

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but "expects to learn what our audience would like to hear as a result of both our formal research, and our close daily contact with our listeners." Programme schedules "will be simplicity itself", scheduled in three or four hour segments with few items lasting more than 2-3 minutes in the mornings and 5 minutes in the afternoons. A small quantity of syndicated material might be purchased if of a high standard. The station hopes ultimately to be on the air 24 hours daily, but will start with 18 hours a day.

3.14 Plans compared with present programming

The views of LACs being confidential to the IBA, those of the Reading Committee on Thames Valley were not available to the present writer. Neither were IBA staff prepared to comment on a station which has yet to come up for its first review - a review which, if favourable, would result in a contract 'roll' of a further year. It must therefore fall to the present writer, on the basis of such monitoring as has been possible, to comment on whether the programme controller is right in saying that the plans have been closely followed.

The conclusion is that, on the whole, he is; that there is a very close match between the plans and the present programming. Admittedly, the plans were general (though more detailed than the summary given here), but clear policy outlines were established and have been adhered to. Music is middle-of-the-road with classical, country and western, soul, rock and nostalgia among the evening specialities. Phone-ins are rare; there are two hours of access programming on Tuesday evenings. On sport, the programme controller admitted to being mistaken and the coverage is now extensive and enthusiastic. A small amount of syndicated material was indeed monitored - a satirical Australian drama serial. A cinema and theatre review is a regular feature and information, some of it of an educational character is the mainstay of the presenters' chat between records. Apart from news bulletins, one presenter, for example, is currently slotting in regular items on hair care, household finance and car maintenance. The programme controller claims these functional items are more acceptable to the audience than "empty chat". Record requests and dedications are therefore not used on the station.

It was not possible to assess from listening alone how far the news element was as critical and investigative of local politics or environmental threats as the plans promised. Thames Valley is unusual in not having a specialist news team, employing instead agencies and freelancers and, inside the station, using all the production staff to collect and feed news in to all parts of the schedule - in addition to regular news bulletins. Some criticism of the weakness of the news output was heard among listeners.

3.15 Consultation with the community

The remarkable point about the programme plans is that they were the work of one person, the programme controller, writing them 15 months before the station's opening, and in one month without any

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consultation with the community. ("The two unsuccessful local consortia did a substantial amount of consultation. I hadn't the time.")

Once the company's financial base was secure and the organisation restructured, did the programme controller then engage in consultation?

> "It was very unspecific from that date on ... You start at the other end then, you see. What you say is, we're in the business as a radio station of communicating with the public: how do you organise your own communications so that they are effective and efficient? People listen to us because they get fast, regular, complete information about what's going on in their locality ... So you set up a relationship with each and every source of information, to get that information as rapidly as possible."

Three groups in the area, the Reading Council of Churches, the Berkshire Community Service Council and the university, had some prior acquaintance with radio (or audio equipment) and the station formed from them an informal liaison committee to encourage outside groups to "think laterally", in the programme controller's phrase, about broadcasting, and to use these outside resources for training and familiarisation. This committee had originally also the aim of taking from the programme controller's shoulders some of the burden of editorial or scheduling decisions where the access programme was concerned. In the event, the access slot has not been oversubscribed, so this function was not exercised.

3.16 Station accessibility

In a sense, the consultation with the community at Thames Valley is only beginning. The accessibility of the station's presenters, who personally deal with audience queries and contacts, is part of a policy to be sensitive to local needs and wishes. The programme controller claims that the station itself is accessible: it may be by telephone but phone ownership is only about 50% in Britain, and the station is situated 5 kilometres out of Reading and it is necessary to go by car to reach it. Once there, there is a friendly atmosphere and space to sit in comfort in the reception area, with a kitchen close at hand for coffee-making. The station staff are young, many of them coming from radio work elsewhere. Compared with BBC Radio Bristol, things seem to be more streamlined and faster moving.

It was interesting to hear from a group using the access slot - a local association of beekeepers - that the origin of their contact with the station was on the advertising sales side of the station. One of the beekeepers is in the motor trade and it was while discussing business that the idea for a beekeeping programme arose - an illustration that commercial contacts can extend community

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involvement. Other recent access programmes have concerned 'economy divorces', high rise apartment blocks, group living, battered babies, the Samaritans, a ski-slope in a local park and Amnesty International.

The station's outside broadcast operation is, on the evidence of one evening at the local motorcycle speedway, friendly and involving of the community. It is certainly used deliberately as a means of meeting the public. Inserted sports items had been prepared by a couple of volunteers: one is a teacher at a comprehensive school and a member of the local Sports Council, the other is an ex-cross-country runner and owns a sports shop.

3.17 Local Advisory Committee

Three weeks after the start of Thames Valley, the IBA announced the formation and membership (12) of its LAC for the Reading area. The Chairperson is the part-time editor of the national magazine of a voluntary organisation and is the mother of three teenage children. Interviewed six months later by the present writer, she described the work of the committee.

It had met once informally and twice formally during the six months. At each meeting, part of its business had been to learn how the station worked by hearing from the programme controller and the sales director. All members of the LAC have visited the station at some time, and the Chairperson has been on air, answering questions in a half-hour morning phone-in during which the LAC's address (box number) was given. A poster has also been circulated in the town informing the public of the LAC's existence and function and inviting comments on Thames Valley. Following the example of the Birmingham LAC, the committee may decide to hold a public meeting, depending on whether further airtime is available or not on the station. The committee has concentrated on certain areas of the station's programming in order to discuss them deliberately at meetings - news has been one such area. Before the first meeting members received a detailed briefing paper from the IBA, with suggestions on what to listen for in the station's output and a questionnaire for use in collecting opinions from among members' friends and contacts.

3.18 Comment

The IBA and parliament have devised a system for the control of commercial radio (adapted from the system for television) which attempts to counter the obvious dangers of commercial or ratings influence on programmes. Apart from that, a very deliberate attempt has been made by the IBA since the introduction of ILR to make public the processes of selection of the companies and the standards by which the successful franchise-holders are judged. Understandably, the station studied here being only six months old, no public comments are yet on record as to its performance. Yet

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even so there is a sense in which the advice even of longer standing LACs and the feedback of IBA reaction to the companies operates in a closed cycle which is not publicly available unless the IBA chooses.

The composition of most ILR stations demonstrates the most obvious form of local control - local ownership. Thames Valley is exceptional in having so little local financial stake in its shareholding. In this respect the local public seem to have been apathetic, and slow also to take advantage of such opportunities as the access slot and the opportunities to question councillors during programmes. This must raise the question of whether Reading was a suitable site for a station, but it also illustrates another point: it is almost impossible for a local public to express an opinion about a service it has not yet experienced. The BBC station manager also hinted at the difficulty of consulting lay people on the 'station sound'.

So the issue is whether, once the service is launched, the public has a chance to affect the station's programming and policy. In formal terms the IBA is ultimately accountable to parliament, but not, despite the presence on the LAC of local authority nominations, to local government. It attempts to publicise locally where people can reach it with comments and criticism.

But there is, in a system which depends directly on the popularity of its programmes with the audience, another sort of accountability which is described by the chief executive of one of the most successful ILR stations, Radio Clyde, as follows:

> "The ultimate control, particularly in radio, lies with the listener ... Unless ILR is serving the broadcasting needs of our listeners they simply will not listen. This is the ultimate in public accountability. We are subject to a daily, indeed an hourly referendum." (24)

The role of the LAC in the light of this is ambiguous, and a note of slight discontent is sounded by the Chairman of the IBA's Local Advisory Council in Birmingham:

> "How does one 'improve' local broadcasting? To interpret the Act literally, this is not our function: we merely reflect the tastes and so on of the local community; but no one can seriously imagine that our advice to the authority should not have the ultimate purpose of improving the quality of what is broadcast". (25)

STATIONS: (C) STAD Radio Amsterdam

3.19 Station profile

Start date: 5 January 1976

Studios: Johannes Vermeerstraat 29, Amsterdam

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Area: Amsterdam and surrounding area, mainly to west and south to a distance of 20-30 km.

Frequency: 240 metres. No VHF.

Staff: 18 full-timers

Finance: Two year allocation from Ministry of Cultural and Social Affairs from licence fee. The budget for 1977 will be approx. 2m guilders.

Hours of programming: 1700-1900 hours, seven days a week, with Hilversum 3 (pop music) for the remaining 22 hours a day.

Formal advice/control structure: STAD (Stichting Amsterdamse Draadloze Omroep = Amsterdam Radio Broadcasting Foundation) is controlled by a Council which appoints an Executive Board and a Programme Advisory Council.

3.20 Area

Amsterdam for most readers is sufficiently well known and at the same time, as a large cosmopolitan city, too complicated for any brief description to do it justice. Suffice it to say here that as far as broadcast coverage is concerned there was no legal local radio until STAD began transmissions at the beginning of 1976, serving an area of approximately one million people.

3.21 Consultation with the community

The initiative was taken five years ago by two members of the Amsterdam City Council who felt that there was a need for better communication and contacts between the local government and its citizens. In the preliminary phase the City of Amsterdam supported this initiative financially and by establishing the organisational framework ie setting up the foundation. All parties in the City Council were consulted and asked to think about the possible structure of a radio station.

The final composition of STAD's council (the Stichtingsraad) was decided after consultation with the City Council, with members appointed by the organisations they represent. The foundation's statutes provide for the Stichtingsraad to appoint individual members as well, up to half its number. Other organisations could be added to those on the present list. For example, there are proposals to add more representatives from education which is thought not to be well represented at the moment.

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The Chairman of the council is also Chairman of the executive board and was involved, while concerned with university radio, with the original initiative for local radio in Amsterdam. He works full time at the station. The present composition of the council includes representatives of housing corporations, industry including the port, the Chamber of Commerce, the Trades Council, the Film Institute, the museums, groups representing sport, consumers, old people, women; two foundations, the universities, two newspapers and the districts (wijkcentra) of Amsterdam. The latter are 28 in number, have no real political power but can advise the City Council on affairs in their neighbourhood. These representatives are thus the nearest to geographical representation on the Stichtingsraad. At first the ministry objected to representation from newspapers which were regarded as a commercial influence. STAD argued that their cultural aim was important. The compromise was to exclude representation of the ownership, but in the end only two newspapers accepted this limitation.

3.22 Formal structure of control

The Dutch Broadcasting Act allows two possible different structures for local broadcasting. The first is that the regional or local station is part of NOS, a situation that can be compared to the BBC and its local stations. The second has already been referred to in CONTEXTS above, and is found in Amsterdam. STAD is a foundation, according to Dutch law, governed by the 35 representatives of the council (Stichtingsraad). The council has laid down editorial guidelines for the station. These are the ideological bases and framework for the editor-in-chief and his staff to act upon in day-to-day work. The council appoints the editor-in-chief (who is also the station manager), and changes in the editorial guidelines need his approval since on appointment he agreed to the existing guidelines as the basis for his work. Control is retrospective when the station manager justifies his policy in the meetings of the council which take place three times a year.

The council appoints an Executive Board (7 members and a secretary) which meets fortnightly and has only very limited power with regard to the programming. Its job is to create the financial, technical and general conditions for the proper functioning of the staff and the programmes. On the recommendation of the station manager, the executive board appoints the members of the staff. Neither staff nor station manager can be dismissed on journalistic grounds without reference to each other.

The council also appoints a Programme Advisory Council (8 members) which meets monthly and consists of well-known journalists and experts in broadcasting and cultural life in Amsterdam. Its advice is confined to programming and programme policy. The station manager is not bound to accept this advice and if the Programme Advisory Council feels strongly enough about the matter they can take it to the Stichtingsraad, which acts as a buffer to some extent between the programme advice and the station manager.

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This structure is very much a part of the experiment, and it could be something that could change. Asked if he felt that the four bodies - council, executive board, Programme Advisory Council and staff - were in the right relationship to each other, the Chairman said that he thought the system had worked out very well. "The only problem is that the Programme Advisory Council should restrict itself to advising the station manager, and people are so very much involved in broadcasts that they are sometimes inclined to go a little bit further, trying to stop certain programmes." Recently, the council over-ruled the proposal of the Programme Advisory Council that broadcasting hours should be divided between morning and evening. The station manager too felt there was some difficulty with the Programme Advisory Council. He described the main goals of the station as interpreted by the PAC as 'information and local character'. His personal view - and he frankly admitted it was not one shared by all the staff - was that the station should act as a platform, especially for those whose upbringing and education has denied them a hearing. This policy of 'positive discrimination' could be said, on a strict interpretation of the editorial guidelines, to infringe the requirement for impartiality.

3.23 Editorial guidelines

The following are points taken from an English summary of the document provided by the Chairman of the council:

> "The difference between STAD and a national broadcasting organisation is a smaller audience and a certain degree of homogeneity within the urban Amsterdam culture. Because of the size of its audience and this homogeneity the station has a great involvement in and acquaintance with Amsterdam. This opens the possibility of a direct contact and communication with the audience. Taking this into consideration, one of the objectives of STAD is to provide ... information in the widest possible sense ... directed both to the entire population and the different parts of it ... In giving information emphasis will be put on news and events, including national and international events, which are important to Amsterdam ... not restricted to the present, but also including the past and future of Amsterdam." "Attention (will be) paid to the smaller events, to arts and sports, both professional and amateur."
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> "In structuring the programme STAD must strive for a balance in the attention to general and specialist subjects, while avoiding hobbyism by the staff. A relation with the audience can be built by regularity and identifiable programming."

The guidelines speak of "the editorial responsibility for giving correct information. As much as possible the principle of giving a hearing to both sides will be applied."

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3.24 Present programming

In the first week of September 1976, at the time of the visit connected with this study, STAD had temporarily increased its programming by an hour a day in order to accommodate live outside broadcasts (OBs) from 1600-1700 from the electronics fair 'Firato'. The OB van attracted a steady crowd of 40-50 people who were interviewed and joined in simple quizzes, as well as watching interviews, discussions and live musical or variety performances.

The regular schedule at the time included daily news at 1700, 1800 and 1900, and 'What's on in Amsterdam' daily except Sunday, and Job Vacancies on weekdays. Programmes on other days were as follows: Monday: Portrait of an Amsterdammer; Youth Programme. Tuesday: Amsterdam Social Problems - different documentaries with expert in studio. Wednesday: City Council report, alternating weekly with 'Rights Workshop'; film review; Old Trades in Amsterdam; record requests. Thursday: Top 10 LPs; film preview; 'Interview', a satire on straight interviews; fruit and vegetable prices; Consumer Protection, alternating weekly with University programme. Friday: Magret Dolman - fictional case-study of a woman alone; weekend sports preview. Saturday: Live programmes made in a different district each week with help of the Wijkcentra: topical issues discussed with inserts of live music and a regular panel discussion. Sunday: Arts magazine; Top 10 books; sports review with scores and reports.

3.25 Station accessibility

The station is entered off the street in a fairly central area of Amsterdam, near the Rijksmuseum and easily reached by public transport. The transmitter is unsatisfactorily located, resulting in clearer signals in Rotterdam than in some parts of Amsterdam. Ironically, the ministry's decision on the PTT's request to move the transmitter to a better site will be the first indication of whether there is a longer term future for the station.

Of the three stations studied, STAD's has the most friendly and functional reception area - a point of importance for any station professing community interest. The ground floor of a tall, narrow terrace building has been opened out to make a staff and visitors' common room with coffee and snack bar at one end.

The OB van at the Firato fair was equipped with an impressive array of publicity posters, explanations and a slide-tape sequence showing the station at work. Other public appearances were more conventional: the coverage of a strike meeting and sports reporting (Uhers) and the Saturday Wijkcentrum programme from a suburb calmly abandoning its planned structure when the public debate on a local planning issue became engrossing and needed more time.

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The introduction of phone-ins was being discussed by the staff the same week. The council Chairman pointed out that a station needed to develop some experience before handling this sort of input. Phone calls during transmission, particularly during programmes like Amsterdam Social Problems often reached 40-60 in the two hour period, with one programme on a scheme to ban traffic from the city centre generating 300 calls.

Both the station manager and his deputy referred to a major difference between STAD and national radio as "giving people more time. We like to let people finish their sentences, so that they have the feeling that we are really taking them seriously." In a revealing moment, the deputy station manager added, "I don't think it's always nice to listen to the programmes, but for the people who've taken part it's very important." The sports reporters echoed this: "The major networks go after the hot news ... they don't go in depth as we try to, because we also have some sort of function in giving advice and community building."

The station manager, concerned that some groups in the population were not represented well, said that his tactic in that case was to invite them in for a talk. For instance, that week a panel of clergymen, invited to a panel discussion, would be encouraged to contribute more religious programming than had occurred so far.

The station originally had begun with high hopes of people coming in to make their own programming or sending tapes for transmission. But the quality of the contributions was very poor and most needed considerable staff editing. There is a realisation that training is necessary pre-condition for any expansion of this sort of access, but that would occupy more time than the staff could afford. The station manager on the other hand, is among those who like to involve outside groups in editing decisions if possible.

What one might call "institutional access" is, as in BBC Radio Bristol, well established. Examples are the job vacancy programmes, the What's On, the consumer protection programme, the "Rights Workshop", the University programme, and the Saturday outside broadcasts from districts.

3.26 Feedback

Formal research is being conducted by the University of Tilburg for both STAD and SROB. An advisory group composed of representatives of the two stations, the university and the ministry is overseeing the research. The final results will not be available until after the end of the two-year term, posing for the station the threat of discontinuity to which no administrative solution has yet been proposed. Another indicator of audience reaction is a NOS-conducted survey based on a small sample of the Amsterdam population. This shows that STAD is already attracting more audience than Hilversum 1 and 2 combined, and that 30% of the audience are listening regularly.

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STAD held a meeting at the end of August with representatives from all the districts of Amsterdam who reported enthusiastically on the station's performance: information was useful, community interaction strong and programming was thought good.

3.27 Comment

STAD Radio Amsterdam incorporates in its system more direct local control than the two British stations. Moreover as part of a national experiment its performance is being researched scientifically in the same design as its sister radio station.

The close community links which the council and its associated board and advisory council provide appear to bring direct benefits in programming and feedback, and although the staff clearly wish for some detachment in which to operate with editorial freedom, their general attitude to the public shows that they regard the extra 'burden' of community involvement as an important part of the job.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It has not been the intention of this report to judge between the different stations - whose complex and fascinating differences in any case make direct comparison impossible. In conclusion, however, some general points can be made with some reference also to the Canadian stations briefly described in the appendix.

Clearly allocation of frequencies must be a responsibility of central government; control, however, can be local, subject to the general conditions of the licence.

Finance is the key to control. The BBC would claim, and STAD also appear to agree, that allocation from central licence fee gives their local stations editorial freedom. This may not preclude community involvement, but accountability in the BBC system is not local. It might be more so if the suggestions for local financial support in the original White Paper were explored afresh. In the Dutch example, one might question whether the accountability of Radio Amsterdam to the 35 organisations which make up STAD can really be meaningful without some financial commitment from the latter. Here the Dutch Ministry and the broadcasters are at present in disagreement.

Of the two Canadian examples, Vancouver Co-op Radio avoided, at least in the beginning, reliance on central grants, Radio Cinq is still dependant on some federal and national funds, but ultimately hopes to be supported entirely from within the community with 'functional' advertising and donations. A recent increase in transmitter power has attracted more advertising support.

This last point illustrates the dilemma facing local systems supported by advertising: transmitter coverage must be large enough to attract sufficient revenue, yet the larger the area served the less the station has the ability to reflect individual communities within it, let alone their ability to control the station. The policies of successive governments influenced the BBC's original decisions on location and coverage (over-large in some cases) of their local stations, but both BBC and IBA have since shown interest in serving smaller areas.

Systems dependent wholly on advertising must satisfy local audiences, and although this introduces another mode of accountability, it does so in a limited field since the arrangement tends to inhibit innovation and to reinforce the essential conservatism of popular taste, itself heavily influenced by if not actually the product of mass media. This is, of course, not all that can be said about ILR stations, and as has been noted, Thames Valley is untypical in several ways. One must note, too, the presence in this system of a separate public authority which publishes its general standards and the company's plans, thus providing criteria for judgement wholly lacking in the BBC system.

Underpinning all three European systems is the view the professionals have of their role. The present writer, following Anthony Smith (26), has discussed elsewhere the restricted (and restrictive) nature of professional attitudes which elevate professionalism to an end in itself (27). Even when experienced and dedicated professionals devote their skills to serving a community, unless they are accountable to a locally representative body they are in effect benevolent dictators.

Only the two Canadian stations have an accountability whose basis is democratic election, and it must be said their structure is only practicable because it relies on an 'electorate' whose consciousness has been raised by at least two years of community work and campaigning in each city.

A point must be made about the licence period: the wish of the STAD professionals for editorial 'elbow-room' is understandable given the very short time (two years) in which they must 'succeed'. It seems better to allow a 3 or 4 year initial period, as the CRTC have done, and the IBA's 'rolling contract' allows local influence to be felt.

Local influence - or, more accurately, the reflection of local opinion - is as close as either British system comes to local control in formal terms over a station which in the IBA system, it will be recalled, is usually locally controlled in financial terms. The advisory committees have, however, different relationships to the station. The BBC advisers are so close (though not in as much control as some would wish) that they risk falling into the trap

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of complicity - that is, their continued association, whether their advice is taken or not, can undermine their credibility as separate agents. The IBA system goes to the other extreme of detachment, but both, in the manner of the selection of members, suffer from the objections made by Liora Salter of Vancouver Co-op Radio:

> "We have the power in the constitution to set up an advisory board. We have decided not to do that, because an advisory board are people who don't have defined responsibility, who don't have accountability to anybody, and who do they represent? And how come they get the right to advise?" (28)
>
> (emphasis added)

The Dutch answer takes care of representation, but the Canadian stations go further in putting their trust in democratic election. If this is a desired goal, a first step towards it could be to open the existing processes to public observation, a step which in itself, as broadcasters transmitting council and parliamentary proceedings have themselves discovered, would have the effect of making those processes more intelligible.

It remains to be seen whether the thorough-going democracy of the Montreal and Vancouver stations will produce programming their communities will want to go on supporting after the initial licence period and whether their systems would work in Europe. There are signs, in the explosion of local radio in Italy and in the encouraging continuation of some of the British cable stations (shortly to be joined by six more cable radio stations) that quite small communities are interested in and can support and control local media.

A P P E N D I X

TWO COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN CANADA

The CBC has developed extensively a number of small community radio stations in the north, but details are given below of two of the small number of stations which are not connected in any way to a national corporation or a commercial network.

Radio Cinq, Montreal

Transmits 80 hours a week to the Centreville area of Montreal in five languages (French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek to which recently Chinese and Haitian have been added). The area has been an immigrant quarter for many years and suffers from the intrusion of new office blocks and motorways as well as a general neglect characteristic of inner city areas. In granting a licence in October 1974, the CRTC viewed "as important such factors as the identification with the area to be served, the representative character of the community support for the applicant and the type of public participation the applicant wants to implement with respect to policies, programming and ownership of the station." (29) A general assembly elects a council of administration (unpaid), whose president is the chief executive, as well as a programme committee (who in turn elect three administrators) whose function is to liaise between community groups and the council of administration. The station aims to find financial support from donations, classified advertisements and simple sponsorship (within strict CRTC limitations) within the community, although it is currently (October 1976) in receipt of grants from the Canada Council, Montreal Arts Council and LIP (job creation) funding from the federal government.

Vancouver Co-op Radio

Licenced in 1974, transmits 60 hours a week. The station aims to avoid dependence on grants and invites groups wishing to make programmes to assist the station in raising the necessary funds. Paid-up members of the co-operative (shares are 2 dollars) elect a board who hire a small number of core staff and approve the formation of programming committees. Each committee elects a member to represent it on an administrative committee of which the staff also are members.

Vancouver Co-op Radio's application for a licence, and the subsequent interview with the Canadian Radio-Television Commission remains one of the best available discussions of community broadcasting and its funding options. (30).

Peter M LEWIS,
17 Southernhay Avenue,
Clifton Wood,
BRISTOL BS8 4TJ

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